

July 1984

U.S. Postal Service to Celebrate Pioneer Day's July 24

19 July 1984 Wave

The Heber City Post Office will be open for business as usual July 24, but there will be no residential or business delivery, Postmaster Lynn Forakis said today.

"The Postal Service in Utah wants as many employees as possible to have the opportunity to observe this important state holiday," the postmaster said. "Postal employees who can be

spared and who would like to celebrate pioneer day will be authorized vacation time."

The postmaster stated, "Express Mail and Special Delivery Mail will be delivered as usual. Mail also will be collected and dispatched in the normal manner. In addition, we will take care of urgent needs if customers notify us."

Lynn noted the Postal Service celebrates similar local holidays in other parts of the country. "Our intention is to provide the best possible service on July 24 while allowing many of our employees the opportunity to participate in pioneer day festivities along with thousands of other residents throughout the state."

U.S. Mail: Rural America Keeps Its Postmark

By Tom Tiede

SMITH ISLAND, Md. (NEA) — It's been nearly 150 years since the U.S. post office laid any claim to speed. The invention of the telegraph (1837) put the real zip in message transportation, and today's electronic revolution has left the mails even further behind in the dust of high technology.

But the letter system still has some nice things going for it. And one of them is its reach. The telegraph cannot speak beyond itself. Modern computers are limited by hardware. The U.S. Postal Service is therefore unsurpassed in the breadth and scope of its function; it can deliver anywhere in the republic.

Smith Island, Md., for example.

Smith Island is one of the most isolated locations in the nation. It is a 36-square-mile fishing community on the windward side of Chesapeake Bay. It is nine miles from land on the east, 20 miles on the west, and it's surrounded by crabs, horseflies, and great ships on their way to Baltimore.

Yet it is not too remote for the mail. There are three small villages on the island, and each has a post office of its own. The older residents say the mail has been delivered by boat, six days a week, for as long as they can remember, which in some cases here in the bay goes back 70 to 80 years.

And that's about right. The

lage here says her post office is the center of island life.

It's a small center, to be sure. The post office has one room, exposed wires and a pair of ice cream tables. Mrs. Evans says postal employees used to sell refreshments as well as stamps, and the tables are left over. They are across the way from the notions case, by the way, and the stack of Methodist hymnals.

The postmaster says the tables are usually occupied. Some people visit the post office twice a day. They come in to send outbound mail in the morning, and they return to collect arriving mail in the afternoon. "They sit down both times," says Mrs. Evans. "Mostly, they just want to talk."

The postmaster is happy to oblige. She says it's part of her job. She is a chubby, friendly native,



Maxine Evans says post office is center of community life.

the principal postal employee here for the last nine years, and she also looks up ZIP codes for older people, helps kids address envelopes and sees to it that a whole lot of local bills are paid.

There is no bank on Smith Island. Half the residents satisfy debts with post office money orders. Mrs. Evans says she writes about \$50,000 worth each quarter, at 75 cents a pop. The profits are pretty good for a small post office like this. But they do not meet the expenses of the Smith Island operation.

And that's important. Rural Free Delivery aside, the mail service has never been a charity. The government has closed almost 30,000 small post offices over the last 50 years to save money, and some USPS officials

think it could save another \$150 million each year by doing away with 7,000 more branches.

The post officers say they won't do it, however. Certainly not to the service on Smith Island. The mail delivery here is part of a system that has served the nation well, if not always with perfection, in good times and bad, and no one in authority wants to fix something that isn't broken.

So Maxine Evan's operation will continue. And that's kind of nice. The small postal services may seem outdated in the electronic revolution, and the ice cream tables are, well, curious, but the down-home delivery of the U.S. mail is still something that seems to get better, and more important, with age.

Smith Island records are not noted for precision, but the best guess is that the area began getting mail on a regular basis at the turn of the century. Isolated people everywhere were clamoring for better service then, and the post office responded with Rural Free Delivery.

The response was godsent. Rural America at the start of the 1900s was a spare and lonely place. There were no automobiles, few telephones, and radio broadcasting was two decades away. The mail was virtually the only thing that laced the backwoods to the city; it was a handwritten lifeline.

So the government expanded the service. And the wonder of RFD changed the face of outback America. People who previously had to collect their mail at urban post offices, often taking a day or more to travel, were put on the same kind of carrier routes that had traditionally connected the rest of the United States.

That meant, eventually, that almost everywhere became part of the mainstream. Even Smith Island. The small dot in the bay had been chartered since 1608 (by Capt. John Smith) and inhabited since 1657. But the beginning of regular mail gave it a federal presence and a place on the popular map.

And the benefits continue. Smith Island now has telephone service and TV reception, but the mail delivery is still the primary link with the world. It is still a bit of a wonder, too; Maxine Evans, the postmaster in the largest vil-

Briefs

Nebo to Destroy

Old Student Files

SPANISH FORK — The Nebo School District will dispose of inactive students' files under the Education of Handicapped Children Act, as prescribed by law, Aug. 1.

Confidential files three years old or more will be destroyed to ensure continued confidentiality. The law allows affected individuals to review their file prior to disposal. Application for a review must be made, and proof of legal right to the information shown. For more information and to apply for a file review, contact Stanley Cammack, 350 S. Main, Spanish Fork or call 798-8651.

Handicapped Ed